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SUBJECT: ATTORNEY GENERAL'S MEETING WITH SPANISH FIRST VICE PRESIDENT DE LA VEGA AND FOREIGN MINISTER MORATINOS

¶1. Summary. During his visit to mark the one-year anniversary of the March 11 terrorist attacks in Madrid, Attorney General Gonzalez met with First Vice President Maria Teresa Fernandez de la Vega, together with Foreign Minister Miguel Angel Moratinos. Spanish Minister of Justice Lopez Aguilar and MFA Director General for North American Affairs Jose Pons were also present on the Spanish side. The Attorney General was joined by Charge Bob Manzanares, AG Chief of Staff Ted Ulyot, Deputy Assistant Attorney General Bruce Swartz and Embassy interpreter Virginia Ghent on the U.S. side. VP De La Vega expressed deep gratitude for the AG's presence at the March 11 commemoration. She asked him to convey to President Bush her government's desire for close, cooperative relations with the U.S. She also noted that USG tended to address its messages directly to the Spanish people rather than "government-to-government." End Summary.

¶2. The AG conveyed to de la Vega U.S. sympathy and condolences on the anniversary of March 11. He noted that despite an "interesting" year of U.S.-Spain relations, the U.S. was grateful for Spain's cooperation on issues such as counter-terrorism and law enforcement and Spain's support in Afghanistan, Haiti, and Iraq reconstruction. He stated that though the two countries have a great deal in common in Latin America, the USG found the Spanish government's objectives regarding Cuba and Venezuela unclear.

First Vice President de la Vega

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¶3. VP de la Vega welcomed the AG on behalf of the entire Spanish government and asked him to thank President Bush on behalf of the GOS for sending a high level delegation to the conference. She stated that the AG's presence was an important gesture of solidarity in an area that unites us: terrorism, and stressed the importance of US-Spain ties as friends and allies.

¶4. De la Vega characterized U.S.-Spain ties, as "magnificent, long-standing, strong, and (which) stretch across many areas." She underscored the need, however, to work more closely on bilateral and multilateral issues. De la Vega said Spain was "privileged" to host U.S. bases (note: she did not refer to the bases as Spanish joint-use bases or to the U.S. military presence at Spanish bases).

¶5. De la Vega noted areas of strong U.S.-Spain cooperation on judicial matters, counter-terrorism, intelligence-sharing, and the recently signed bilateral protocol to the US-EU MLAT and extradition treaties. She recalled her experience as a judge and as Deputy Justice Minister that made her well aware of the fact that the relations with the U.S. were close and essential. She added that the GOS wants to continue intensifying relations.

¶6. Regarding multilateral relations, she focused on Spain's efforts in Haiti, Afghanistan, the Balkans and Iraq reconstruction. She said there were many other areas to explore during the desired visits to the U.S. by the Ministers of Foreign Affairs, the Interior, Justice and Education. The GOS wanted these visits to underscore its desire to improve relations between the U.S. and Spanish governments. She noted that the U.S. government tends to address messages directly to the Spanish people, but that "government-to-government dialogue" needs to improve.

¶7. VP de la Vega again stressed the Spanish government's desire for close cooperation with the U.S. and stressed our common challenge in the effort to combat terrorism. Regarding Latin America, she sought to reassure the AG that Spain is on the same wavelength as the U.S. on the subject of Cuba and Venezuela, and wants to work with the U.S. to promote democracy. She said it was important that the two governments understand what each is doing in Latin America to avoid misunderstanding and develop our relations on the basis of mutual trust.

¶8. Attorney General Gonzalez said he appreciated these comments and that trust is important. He noted that the U.S. and Spain share a common tragedy and that he was here to

help establish a good, strong working relationship between the two governments.

Foreign Minister Moratinos

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¶ 9. Foreign Minister Moratinos, who participated in the meeting with the Vice President, said Spain wants to develop stronger bilateral relations with the U.S. He stated that Spain has the same concerns as the U.S. regarding the major problems of the world and that Spain is a loyal and trustworthy ally in the Atlantic Alliance. He believed that the December NATO summit talks with President Bush and Secretary of State Rice were good. Moratinos emphasized

SIPDIS

that the U.S. and Spain have a long history of friendship.

¶ 10. Moratinos said Spain can add value to what the European Union can bring to the table, particularly on Latin America and in the Middle East/North Africa. Moratinos said that Spain has a tradition of close relations with the Middle East, and said that, like President Bush and the U.S. Government, Spain believes the Middle East should modernize, stabilize and move toward democratic reform. He said Spain has influence in the region that could be helpful. He said in his previous talks with Secretary of State Rice, he mentioned Spain's role, and will push the issue again when they meet in April.

¶ 11. On Latin America, where, he noted, Spain and the U.S. are the only outside players, Spain also plays an important role.

Moratinos said it was critical for the U.S. and Spain to work together in this region. He said he spoke to Secretary of State Rice in London about holding a meeting to develop an overall global strategy with the U.S. in Latin America.

¶ 12. Moratinos said the losers in Latin America are the governments that are not consolidated and people living in countries that have experienced the rise of populist governments like Cuba and Venezuela, which are undemocratic. The U.S. and Spain have the same goals in Cuba and Venezuela: to promote democracy and consolidate the path to democracy for these countries, although we vary on method. Spain will always work with groups in these countries seeking to promote democracy and do so transparently. Spain will support the opposition. Spain will not support Castro or the populism of Chavez. Moratinos said that the U.S. and Spanish governments need to talk more about Cuba and Venezuela, speak to each other directly on strategy and short-term goals, and act together toward the same objectives.

¶ 13. AG responded that the U.S. welcomes transparency, as we are somewhat confused by Spain's actions in Cuba and Venezuela.

¶ 14. At the close of the meeting, Vice President de la Vega specifically asked the Attorney General to convey to President Bush the Spanish government's firm commitment and strong desire to have more direct lines of communication to work together on common challenges on the basis of mutual trust and respect.

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